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Trial Balloon

Release by the Johnson administration of a Central Intelligence Agency study that calls for "some kind of negotiated settlement" in South Viet Nam looks to us like a trial balloon for appeasement in Southeast Asia.

The paper was written by a member of the Board of National Estimates — a top echelon group within the CIA. Never, to our knowledge, has this kind of secret document been released to the press.

The Johnson administration offers the excuse that it was to be published by a Midwest newspaper. We would like to know much more about the circumstances. All Board of National Estimates papers are top secret. Anyone who leaks one of these documents is subject to prosecution. The President should launch an investigation.

The content of the paper shows that the unidentified author is inclined to appeasement. He terms the war in South Viet Nam "more a political contest than a military operation," blames reverses on the assassinated President Diem, and says "there remains serious doubt that victory can be won."

If this is the kind of thinking that prevails in the Johnson administration, it is doubtful that the war can be won. No war is won by defeatists. Nor will the war in South Viet Nam be won when the communists enjoy a privileged sanctuary in North Viet Nam. Existence of a privileged sanctuary cost the U.S. the war in Korea.

Guerrilla fighting, student riots and internal subversion are forms of warfare in which communists excel. If the United States and its free-world allies cannot find a successful way to combat these tactics, they not only cannot win a war in the Far East, but anywhere else — including home territory.

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